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ABSTRACT

The responsibility of the National Park Service should be to interpret and convey the contribution of each park and the park system to the nation's values, character, and experience. This workbook (or "thinkbook") provides activities, exercises, and examples to help National Park Service personnel learn how to tell compelling stories. The workbook discusses what compelling stories are (emblematic anecdotes or pieces of information); how to use compelling stories; developing interpretive programs around compelling stories; measuring the effect of compelling stories; identifying compelling stories; and what to do with compelling stories. Contains two example compelling stories and 10 "think exercises." (RS)

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Achieving Excellence in Interpretation

ED 413 602

Compelling Stories

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CS 216 072

An Introduction to Compelling Stories

The Compelling Story concept is something with which we are already familiar. It is what many of the best interpreters already do. It is an opportunity for interpreters to further embrace Freeman Tilden's Principles of Interpretation, and to apply them in innovative, thought provoking ways. The stories we tell and the resources we manage and protect, must be placed in a context of broader meaning and significance. When we interpret well, our audiences become participants, not spectators, and the resources we interpret become theirs. When we do our job well, visitors develop a deeper commitment to the stewardship of our national treasures.

Compelling stories are at the heart of thematic interpretation which focus our messages on the essential, most relevant stories each park has to tell and how they fit into a larger scientific, historic, social, or economic context.

National Park Service-U.S. Department of Interior

The only real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes but in having new eyes. —MARCEL PROUST

COUNCIL FOR AMERICAN INDIAN INTERPRETATION

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24 October 1996

Members of CAII:

Thank you for expressing your confidence in me to be your CAII Chairman for the coming term.

I wish to repeat my goals for you all as I move into this responsibility. I will assure that our organization will be truly national, serving the needs to interpreters in all of the NAI regions. Annual meetings of the executive board and the membership will coincide with the NAI National Annual Workshops.

My focus will be on member services. The first priority will be to publish a quarterly newsletter that will be useful to "front line" interpreters. I will encourage expansion of useful sessions on sensitive interpretation of American Indian cultures and histories at the national and regional workshops.

I am establishing a clearing house and a data base to match requests for interpretive support with the appropriate Tribal expert. I will encourage respect to Tribal consultants, as true professionals.

I have been active in providing consultancies, with the approval of CAII, since I was involved as a member of the Charter executive board. I have consultation experience with several Indian Tribes, the National Park Service, the Bureau of Land Management, the National Forest Service, and a variety of other agencies, museums, and educational institutions. I am now in the early stages of writing a manual for SENSITIVE INTERPRETATION OF THE AMERICAN INDIAN EXPERIENCE.

Please feel free to contact me to discuss the future directions of the Council for American Indian Interpretation. I am always open to dialogue, suggestions, and constructive criticism. I want to serve you all in the best interest of assuring the future vitality of our very important organization.

Keep in touch.

My best regards,

James A. Goss

Jim Goss, Chairman

THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR INTERPRETATION

A SECTION OF THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR INTERPRETATION

THE MESSAGE: It should be the responsibility of the National Park Service to interpret and convey each park unit's and the park system's contribution to the nation's values, character, and experience.

THE MESSENGER: There are many messengers who tell compelling stories. The resources themselves speak loudly. It is called the "power of place." Interpreters play the role of facilitator—we help visitors come face to face with the real thing. Giving voice to the message is the responsibility of every person in the National Park Service including park managers, members of every division, concessioners, and partners.

This is not a Work book...
It is <u>your</u> THINK book.

This book is only 50 percent complete. When you write in your ideas, your Compelling Stories, then this book will be complete.
Use it often. Use it up.

What are Compelling Stories?

Your Ideas

Compelling stories are emblematic anecdotes or pieces of information that represent the greater meaning or significance of the resource.

Compelling stories move visitors to care more deeply for the resource. The stories appeal to universal questions, moral dilemmas, beliefs, drama, and conditions that make up the human experience. Much like Greek myths, compelling stories provide a vehicle to attempt to understand that which is larger than the common perceptions of existence.

> ***"In the national parks we're not protecting things, we're protecting process. Nature is not a snapshot, it's a moving picture. Understanding that those processes may be beyond our control is what makes the lessons of the park truly great."***
>
> **—From a Compelling Story Workshop at Yellowstone**

How to Use Compelling Stories

Your Ideas

The Compelling Story concept should be approached on two levels:

- -as a skill or a way of "seeing" for each individual interpreter
- -as a vehicle for an interpretive division or a park staff to focus more clearly on the meaning and significance of park resources.

Compelling stories are based on rich and accurate subject matter knowledge, and become self-evident because of their relevance and meaning. The stories are presented with a variety of appropriate interpretive techniques—told in a compelling manner.

Compelling stories are often the product of individual insight. There are countless compelling stories at each resource. Not all compelling stories should be told by all interpreters. Each compelling story can be viewed as an individual piece of art. Van Gogh did not paint like Picasso, but both produced masterpieces that appealed to universal ideas and meanings.

Individual interpreters should be such artists who use the knowledge of their resource and their communication skills to help visitors see the universal meanings of the resource.

Compelling Stories. . .

Self Evaluation

In what quadrant do your interpretive presentations *now* fall?

Compelling Stories Mundanely Told	**Mundane Stories Compellingly Told**
Mundane Stories Mundanely Told	**Compelling Stories Compellingly Told**

Com-pel-ling: a Definition

forcing or driving a course of action
demanding respect, honor or admiration
having a powerful or irresistible effect

Story: a Definition

In literature, a story is:
a circumstance that ***changes*** *due to* ***conflict*** *which is ultimately* ***resolved****.*
The three universal themes of literature (and storytelling) are:

- *man versus man*
- *man versus nature*
- *man versus himself*

Why Develop Interpretive Programs Around Compelling Stories?

Each National Park site exists because it has some transcendent meaning. It was designated because an influential group of people saw the site as meaningful and significant to the values and interests of the American people. Former Director of the National Park Service, Newton B. Drury, once observed that national parks are established not solely to preserve scenic landscapes and historic places, but also to provide a greater dividend because of their unique value in "ministering to the human mind and spirit."

Many park visitors understand this meaning when they visit national parks. Many others do not.

A key mission of interpretation is to promote the protection and preservation of the resource. If the American public is to take a committed and active role in the protection and preservation of the resource, it is critical that they become sensitized to the value of the resource. When visitors care more about the resource, when they come to understand their own relationship to the resource, their values, love, beliefs, and spiritual awareness, they may be motivated to action resulting in stewardship for that resource.

It is essential that interpreters realize their primary role is to cultivate this care and love for the resource and what it represents.

It is the job of interpreters to connect visitors to the meaning of the resource and provoke care.

Interpreters can do this with compelling stories that are relevant to visitors, and which challenge the audience to reexamine their own values relative to these significant resources.

Your Ideas

"While human technologies have temporarily remolded Glen Canyon, the canyon has most certainly remolded our ecological consciousness. It has awakened us to certain environmental questions and consequences: questions regarding humanity's right to reshape the world, and the consequences of running out of world to reshape."

—Essay by Anne Markward

How to Measure the Effect of Compelling Stories

Your Ideas

Ultimately, measuring the effect of a compelling story is subjective. Yet there are guidelines:

- -Does the story move the visitor?
- -Do visitors care more about the resource because of the Story?
- -Are visitors moved to some action that supports the stewardship of the resource?
- -Is the story emblematic? Does it represent some larger concept or meaning?
- -How does it connect to that larger meaning?
- -Can visitors clearly understand that connection?
- -Does the compelling story touch on a universal concept that is relevant to the visitor?
- -Is the story at its very core something that people care about?

At the heart of Compelling Stories are three of Tilden's principles:

- -Interpretation is *revelation* based upon information.
- -Interpretation is *provocation*, not instruction.
- -Interpretation presents *the whole*, rather than a part.

"Yellowstone is not just a place, it is an ideal. While its original intent was to preserve geothermal "curiosities," it has come to symbolize something far greater. It represents one of the few times in the history of Western culture when voice and dignity have been given to wildness —to plants, and animals and process."

—From a Compelling Story Workshop at Yellowstone

THINK EXERCISE

Think of a story or "set" of information that you interpret. Then reexamine Tilden's principles listed above and consider the following questions:

A: What is the *revelation* we seek for park visitors?

B: What thoughts or actions do we hope to *provoke*?

C: What *whole* are we trying to communicate to visitors?

D: Why do we, as an agency, believe interpretation is important? What do we wish to accomplish?

Tips For Indentifying Compelling Stories

It is of great value for the individual interpreter to work through these exercises alone. Ultimately it is the individual interpreter who creates "the work of art." It is therefore critical that each interpreter be encouraged to develop the skill of identifying and presenting their own compelling stories.

There is, however, great energy, insight, synergy, and skill that can be shared by also involving a larger group. When a group focuses on the meaning and relevance of a park, the collaborative interpretive effort improves.

Begin this group process with the full interpretive staff and then include other divisions, cooperating association employees, concessioners, and partners. Identifying the essential park messages and universal meanings is a process that benefits from including many. A clear understanding of what the relevance of park resources are forms a bond among those who serve the public and protect those resources, and helps build understanding of why it is important to preserve the tangible and intangible elements of our national parks.

It is also useful to involve visitors in the process of identifying the important messages. Visitor's impressions are the core of their experience and can provide insight into what is compelling about the resource. Ask them for their views.

Your Ideas

"...nothing short of defending this country in wartime compares in importance with the great central task of leaving this land even a better land for our decedents than it is for us...."

— President Theodore Roosevelt

THINK EXERCISE

1. Describe one or two experiences with a visitor who seemed to feel the importance of the site.

2. Can you apply any of these visitor experiences to your programs?

Even if you do not have the opportunity to explore the Compelling Stories concept with an organized group, be sure to share your thought process with others and ask them the same questions you ask yourself.

Seeking the important connections between resources and their broader meanings, interpreting the *whole* in a *relevant* and *provocative* way is an *art*. And, to some degree, is teachable. Following are several processes for making such connections.

Your Ideas

THINK EXERCISE

Name one significant resource in your park.

Then, write as many words as you can think of that are synonyms for first impressions that visitors have about that resource. Save this list for later use.

"The Everglades are a test. If we pass the test, we get to keep planet earth."

— Marjorie Stoneman Douglas

Linking National Park Resources to a Larger Context:

Your Ideas

The units of the national park system preserve such *tangible* resources as:

Objects: Museum collections, exhibits, and research collections are filled with original objects of great significance. These objects only have meaning, however, in a larger context—their significance must be linked to ideas and values through education.

Places: From vast wilderness to intimate historic sites, the sense of place, as preserved and protected within the park system has the potential for powerful lessons. The National Park Service preserves much more than scenery. Just being in a

"Black Canyon is like no other place on earth—it has its own feeling, its own rhythm, its own life, and more than anything, its own pervasive timelessness. Time stands still here. We feel very small."

—from the Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Monument South Rim Driving Tour Guide

place where something of great significance occurred can have a "transforming" effect.

Events: Often the preservation efforts of the National Park Service focus less on tangible resources and more on events that occurred over a span of time and geography. *What* happened may be as important as *where* it happened.

These three things generally represent the *tangible*, primary resources of national parks.

Intangible resources include:

Processes: The protection and preservation of process is a critical responsibility of the NPS. "Process" ranges from massive geologic process, to social and economic process as part of heritage and culture. The conservation of living cultures is as important as the interpretation of ancient cultures, just as the protection of natural processes is critical to the maintenance of a healthy planet.

Systems: Systems can be many things, from living, biological systems, to social systems and systems of government. Every resource protected by parks is a part of a larger system, and those resources must be intellectually linked to their system.

Ideas: Ideas are powerful notions which gave birth to a nation, drove it to Civil War, and caused conflict with native peoples and the land itself. "Ideas" encompass concepts of wilderness, preservation, and decision making. Ideas define heritage, culture, and science. Every park resource is a source of important compelling ideas.

Values: At the very foundation of any park site are values. These are the reasons why people cared, care now, or might come to care about a site in the future. These values often conflict in the present as well as in the past. In many cases, it is the conflict of values that caused the site to have significance in the first place. These values are always subjective and often appeal to universal issues.

Your Ideas

THINK EXERCISE

Name ONE object, place, or event preserved in your park

Connect it to its larger context of:

process -

systems -

ideas -

values -

Is there a story that emerges from this connection? Is the story emblematic or representative of a larger meaning? Is the story relevant and moving? To whom? Does the story appeal to a universal meaning?

"The care of rivers is not a question of rivers, but of the human heart."

— **Tanaka Shozo**

The "Documents" Exercise:

Clues to identifying the compelling stories in each park unit can be found in a number of documents. These include:

Enabling Legislation and any subsequent legislation

Statement for Management

Statement for Interpretation or Annual Interpretive Plan

General Management Plan

The word "clue" is the operative word here. Rarely do these documents have a clear vision of the park's essential meanings and purpose. Even if the notion is there, it is sometimes not well stated. You may have to "mine" out the significance.

Your Ideas

Using these documents, try the following:

1) Examine the documents and extract key words and phrases. Look beyond the concrete definitions and interpret concepts, ideas, and meanings. *When* a park was established may be revealing. Does it tell something about the values of that time period?

2) Develop a list of significant natural, cultural, and human resources in the park. Compare the list of significant resources to the key words and phrases and your interpretation of the concepts, ideas, and meanings. What emerges?

3) Develop a simple statement of park purpose(s). Park purpose is defined as the reason or reasons for which the park was established.

4) Develop a series of statements that summarize the park's significance. These statements should capture the essence of the area's importance to our natural and cultural heritage. Significance is usually related to the park's purpose, but is sometimes totally different. Significance statements usually address the "oldest, tallest, longest, only, first, last" elements of specific resources. Use the list of significant resources to help craft statements of significance.

5) When you are satisfied with the purpose and significance statements, put them to the acid test. Ask: "So What?" and "Who" cares?

6) Lastly, compare the purpose and significance statements with the park's stated Interpretive Themes. Do the themes support those two statements?

Your Ideas

"Give me your tired, your poor, Your huddled masses, yearning to breathe free, The wretched refuse of teeming shore. Send these, the homeless, tempest-tossed to me, I lift up my lamp beside the golden door!"

— Emma Lazarus

THINK EXERCISE

1. Write in one or two sentences, the legislative purpose for which your unit of the system was established.

2. Briefly list the significant resources of the park.

THINK EXERCISE

After you have defined the purpose for which your park was established, and have identified at least two significant resources, answer these questions:

How are these significant resources relevant to visitors?
What are the important concepts that visitors might take away from the site?

Is there a story that connects that which is relevant to the visitor with one or more of those concepts? Is the story emblematic or representative of a larger meaning? Is the story relevant and moving? To whom? Does the story appeal to a universal meaning?

"In great deeds something abides. On great fields something stays. Forms change and pass; bodies disappear; but spirits linger, to consecrate ground for the vision-place of souls. And reverent men and women from afar, and generations that know us not and that we know not of, heart-drawn to see where and by whom great things were suffered and done for them, shall come to this deathless field, to ponder and dream; and lo! the shadow of a mighty presence shall wrap them in its bosom, and the power of the vision pass into their souls."

—General Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain, Gettysburg, October 3, 1889.

THINK EXERCISE

1) Think of the stories about your park resources that move you the most. Do they have any universals in common?

2) Who does care about your park resources? Who loves those resources? Who dislikes those resources? Why do people have strong feelings about the park resources? Are they responding to a universal condition, a universal question, or a universal truth?

THINK EXERCISE

Identifying the Universal:

Can you link any of your significant resources and interpretive themes to:

Conflict between people or cultures

Conflict between people and natural systems

Internal conflicts within individuals with broader implications

Resolution of conflict

Non-resolution of conflict

Consequences of action

Consequences of in-action

Commitment to universals:

- courage
- politics
- religion
- race
- violence
- family
- sacrifice
- love
- hate

Other universal conditions you may suggest

"Nothing speaks so eloquently of the tragedy of Georgia's Andersonville as the row upon row of headstones in the National Cemetery. They represent one of the greatest misfortunes of the Civil War...one of the by-products of modern conflict: massive numbers of prisoners. 'Turn you to the stronghold, ye prisoners of hope'."

—William C. "Jack" Davis

An Example:

In early September 1862, the American Civil War was technically not about slavery. Of course many people, Northern and Southern, white and black, cared passionately about the subject and understood things might be changing. But officially, the North continued to wage a war for reunification and a Union that sanctioned human property.

On September 15, 1862, 12,500 Union troops surrendered to Confederates at Harpers Ferry, Virginia. Most of the southern forces left the scene of their victory quickly, as the Confederates were to fight the Battle of Antietam 17 miles away and two days later.

In a way, things looked pretty good for the 12,500 surrendered Union troops. They were likely to be paroled and sent home. Paroles were common at that stage of the war. A prisoner would sign a piece of paper promising not to fight again until he was duly exchanged, and then he was free to go about his way. At Harpers Ferry, in September, the process moved quickly. Enlisted men surrendered their weapons, but the officers were allowed to keep their sidearms.

Colonel Trimble, the commander of the 60th Ohio Volunteer Infantry Regiment was concerned. He had a number of free African Americans who had been working as servants and teamsters for his regiment ever since they enlisted in Ohio. These blacks were not runaway slaves. This was important as the Confederates were rounding up hundreds of "contrabands" or runaway slaves that had moved into the Union lines at Harpers Ferry. These African Americans were typical of blacks all over the South who saw the war as an opportunity to end slavery. Thousands of these people left their bondage, went to the United States military, and offered their support in the war effort. In 1862, they were working as laborers, teamsters, cooks, scouts, spies, and making a significant contribution to the North's military effort.

The Confederates were taking the captured African Americans in Harpers Ferry and sending them back into slavery. Colonel Trimble did not want his free blacks from Ohio to mistakenly be taken with the runaways. Trimble approached Confederate General A. P. Hill. Hill agreed to give passes to Trimble's free blacks and the issue seemed settled.

On the morning of September 16, Trimble and the 60th Ohio prepared to march across a pontoon bridge into Maryland. A Confederate cavalry squad was stationed there to keep things orderly and make sure no blacks slipped across with the troops. Trimble showed the Confederates the passes that General Hill had provided for the Ohio free blacks. The Confederates refused to allow the African Americans to pass.

Colonel Trimble responded by reaching into his holster, drawing his revolver, and holding the Confederate officer at gunpoint until the entire 60th, African Americans and all, were across the river.

No one knows his motivation. Trimble may have been an abolitionist, may have felt some special duty to those blacks, may have been tired of losing, or may simply have hated the Confederates.

In any case, Colonel Trimble's stand on the Potomac River represents countless such incidents in which individuals had to make choices about race and slavery. The war was indeed changing. Just a week later, after the Battle of Antietam, Abraham Lincoln issued the Preliminary Emancipation Proclamation. Some thought the Union troops would not support Lincoln's actions and might even throw down their guns and go home rather than fight a war against slavery.

But they did not.

Indeed there was much grumbling. But there were enough Colonel Trimbles and enough African Americans who had taken freedom into their own hands and confronted all the Colonel Trimbles with their humanity—there were enough of these confrontations and moral dilemmas to make the war something else.

As messy and corrupt and tragic and immoral as it would continue to be, the war had also become about freedom.

Another Example:

Vignettes of Wild America

Within this precious reserve rest vignettes of wild America—individual stories that together are uniquely Rocky Mountain National Park.

...Sheer granite walls inspire awe and provoke challenge. Colorful kaleidoscopes of mountain wild flowers carpet our thoughts and soothe our spirits. Trail Ridge Road spans the roof of the continent opening up a world of wonder in the alpine tundra—and over 350 miles of trails offer pathways to new experiences.

Mountain lakes provide opportunities for reflection. Cascading streams carry waters that cleanse our souls. Each of nature's details express a quiet dialogue of its own....

These elements, preserved upon the doorstep of more than 4 million people comprise the reservoir of accessible, welcoming wildness that is Rocky Mountain National Park.

Rocky is the destination of nearly 3 million people each year. What draws them here is summarized by one visitor's comments:

"Rocky's high country offers us an escape from the blast furnace heat of summers on the plains. But the park is also a respite from the stresses of our day-to-day lives. Rocky gives us a chance to reenergize and to enjoy each other. The whole family is brought together."

"I first came to Rocky with my grandparents nearly 70 years ago to stay in a cabin in Moraine Park. Now I am bringing my grandchildren. I have traveled to a lot of other places, but this one is like a magnet...I have to come back."

"My grandparents' cabin was torn down in the 50s; part of the effort to restore the land to the way it was before tourists started to come. Now we stay in a motorhome, still at Moraine Park, but in the campground. We like to spend our time hiking, watching wildlife, and fishing the Big Thompson—just as I did when I was a boy."

"It is reassuring to know this place will always be here; that my grandkids will be able to bring their own children to Rocky Mountain National Park and share with them this world I love so much—long after I am gone."

Rocky's neighbors share a deep respect for the park, as well. Estes Park author Paul Firnhaber has described the irresistible forces of Rocky in these words:

"Of all the reasons to get away from it all and to escape to these mountains from time to time, perhaps the one that is most compelling is an unconscious reason. We sense that somehow our roots as human beings are nestled into the floor of these forests, and that our histories are connected to the natural life systems we experience here...."

"We are from this wilderness, this natural place, and return in yearning for our history and our longing to know our roots. We are not unlike barnyard geese who, when distant and wilder relatives fly overhead on their migration treks, flap their wings and nervously hop and honk...."

"For even though our wilder origins have, for the most part, been acculturated out of us, there remains a strong unconscious memory of our connectedness with the earth. We return for mysterious and unspoken reasons, as if on a pilgrimage to a sacred place...."

"There are few places left where we can come to reaffirm our part in the natural order. Rocky Mountain National Park is such a place. For not only does it possess an unsurpassed natural beauty, it is a healthy, living biosphere where the natural function of life systems can occur with minimum interference...."

"This is a place where we can rediscover our sense of wonder and awe: that which makes us human. Here we can develop a new perspective, a way of seeing things freshly, perhaps even find, by comparison, that which we have lost. This park is the touchstone for rekindling our relationship with the earth and for renewing our understanding about who we are and where our journeys are taking us."

Nature is not only life, but the joy of living. One picture book, one camping trip as a child—remind us that the joy of discovery awaits us in the natural world. For ourselves and those to come, the landscape of Rocky Mountain National Park offers more than just mountains; it offers a geography of hope.

THINK EXERCISE

What in these stories represents a larger meaning?

Are the stories moving? Why or why not?

Do the stories relate to universal concepts? If so, what are they?

Can you find the tangible aspects of the stories and place them in their intangible aspects—processes, systems, ideas, values?

"Recorded in limestone are dynamic and complete paleoecosystems that spanned two million years. Preservation is so complete that it allows for detailed study of climate change and its effects on biological communities. Visitors discover that this resource displays the inter-relationships of plants, insects, fishes, reptiles and mammals, like few other known fossil sites. The relevance and challenge of study and preservation of this ancient ecosystem are equal to those of a modern ecosystem."

— Fossil Butte National Monument

THINK EXERCISE

Look again at all previous Think Exercises. Based on your work thus far, write a sentence or paragraph describing a compelling story or stories about the resources preserved in your unit of the national park system.

Is what you have just written representative of a larger meaning? Is the story relevant and moving? To whom? Does the story appeal to a universal meaning?

What To Do With Compelling Stories...

Once the Compelling Stories concept has been explored more focused interpretation should result. This focus will be evident in all aspects of your visitor services program. Integrating the concept of interpretive focus through compelling stories will assure continuity for interpretive planning and programming.

Information and Orientation

Visitor expectations can be molded through your information and orientation efforts. Pre-visit information packets should focus on the compelling stories you have to tell—messages that relate to visitors and raise sensitivity or cultivate care. On-site information, through a variety of publications such as park newspapers, site bulletins, brochures, and AV programs should be focused on the compelling stories.

There should be clear communication of why visitors should care about the resources and the reasons they are relevant.

Information and orientation that is focused on the essential, relevant stories and resources of the park should also be the foundation of information distributed by park concessioners and cooperating associations. This implies a level of training and guidance on the part of park personnel to ensure partners maintain a significant role in information and orientation services.

Personal Services

The creative tools and techniques of interpretive presentation, in the hands of skilled field interpreters, can communicate in a compelling way by revelation and provocation, the meanings of the park. Compelling stories simply provide another approach or vehicle for cultivating care for the resource in visitors.

The compelling story should provide the interpreter and the audience the opportunity to reexamine personal values, with visitors doing their own interpretation as the ultimate goal. The compelling story is *not* a "paid political announcement" at the beginning or end of a program. It is instead, the universal meanings around which the entire program is built, based upon park themes, purpose, and significant resources.

Your Ideas

"Great Smoky Mountains National Park thus preserves not only life and land, but offers the proof and promise of society's commitment to improving the quality of human life."

— Rita Cantu

Interpretive Media

Incorporation of the concept of the compelling story in interpretive media is a long-range goal. When planning begins for any new media, the essential meanings and concepts of the park should be central to the process. When completed, exhibits, wayside exhibits, AV presentations, and publications tell the park story in a durable, long-lasting way. Will those messages be relevant 20 years from now? Focused interpretation will ensure that they are.

Training

Seasonal training, both for the Division of Interpretation, as well as for other park staff and concessioners, should begin with a participatory session about the meanings of the park. All other training should be evaluated in terms of how it supports visitor access to those essential meanings.

Educational Outreach

The role of the park as a place to raise sensitivity and the level of care depends on its ability to tell the compelling story. Educational partners are in the position to teach the skills and tactics necessary for action. It is critical that parks provide those partners in education and preservation with a clear understanding and ability to use of the "power of place."

Planning

The Comprehensive Interpretive Plan should strongly reflect the central focus of the compelling story. A complete reexamination of the strategy for interpretation should be reflected in this document.

Long-range interpretive planning should be predicated upon the concept of compelling stories. The finished document should be a strategic plan which incorporates the essential messages at all levels of interpretive services.

Your Ideas

Many thanks to Connie Rudd and her colleagues who have nurtured and developed the Compelling Stories concept.
Produced by K.C. DenDooven

Now-
the door
is opened
for you

What's Next?
-You

You've got
to step
through it

-Now!

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